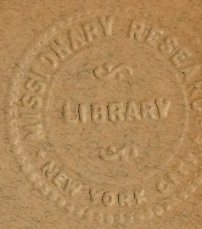


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MISSION HEROES.



A SHORT MEMOIR

OF

James Alfred Colbeck,

MISSION PRIEST (S.P.G.),
AND CHAPLAIN OF MANDALAY, BURMA.

By HIS BROTHER.



SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

LONDON: NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, W.C.;

BRIGHTON: 129, NORTH STREET.

1902.

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JAMES ALFRED COLBECK,

MISSION PRIEST (S.P.G.), AND CHAPLAIN OF
MANDALAY, BURMA.

ENTERED INTO REST, MARCH 2, 1888.

BY

HIS BROTHER.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACT COMMITTEE.

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43, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET, E.C.

BRIGHTON: 129, NORTH STREET.

NEW YORK: E. & J. B. YOUNG AND CO.

1902.

To
MY BRETHREN,
THE
MEMBERS OF THE
JUNIOR CLERGY MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION
IN CONNECTION WITH S.F.G.,
THIS SHORT MEMOIR
IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.



A SHORT MEMOIR
OF
JAMES ALFRED COLBECK.

—♦—
INTRODUCTION.

SOME considerable time has elapsed since I was invited to write a short memoir of my late revered brother, the Rev. James Alfred Colbeck, as a contribution to the "Mission Heroes" Series, published by the venerable S.P.C.K.

I cannot do better than introduce the subject of our memoir in the words of one whom missionaries in every part of the world have reason to love and reverence for his zeal and devotion in the great cause of the Church's mission to bring the heathen world to the feet of Christ.

Canon Bailey wrote to the *Guardian* newspaper, in March, 1888, as follows:—

"Alas! the startling news has just been sent over from Burma that the Rev. James Alfred Colbeck has been carried off by fever. No doubt we shall soon be in possession of further particulars under what circumstances that noble life has come to its earthly close. No doubt, also, at some early date the sympathetic pen of some one familiar with all that has passed at Mandalay will prepare for the Church a record of the fourteen years'

career of one who has richly earned a name among 'Mission Heroes,' one of whom St. Boniface's Warminster, and St. Augustine's Canterbury, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel may well be proud with thanksgiving to the Lord of the harvest, Who has sent forth such a labourer into His harvest. Meanwhile I would ask to be allowed to express, through your columns, some few reminiscences by way of contribution to an 'In Memoriam,' for I well remember, when passing through Yorkshire in the year 1870, a youth, small of stature, but with sparkling eye, elastic step, and buoyant manner, coming to see me by appointment to offer himself for St. Augustine's and missionary work. I recall his college career as one of peculiar distinction, for he was first in every department, and his unwavering attachment to his teachers. When decorated with what was regarded as the blue ribbon of the college, 'The Student's Memorial Scholarship,' on which occasion 'The Scholar' was wont to write some text in the books committed to his keeping, he chose one which I think well reflected his mind and character, 'He shall be our Guide unto death.'

"Had he been spared until the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in Upper Burma had been settled, I have reason to believe his Bishop would have decorated him with a far greater distinction, and made him the first Archdeacon of Mandalay. But may we not believe that he has been bidden by the gracious call of the Great Master, with the greeting, 'Friend, go up higher'?

"Others may tell, as did the Special Correspondent of the *Times* a while ago, of his rare distinction as a Burmese scholar. I would rather dwell on the consecration of his whole life and powers to his Lord's service in that distant dependency of the British Empire, without a thought,

which he would have scorned, of relinquishing it. His last letter to myself, dated December 31, 1887, beginning and ending with his usual affectionateness, breathed the very spirit of a man consumed with zeal, like his Master; it is charged to the full with missionary fire.

“HENRY BAILEY, D.D.,
“*Commissary to the Bishop of Rangoon.*”

A fitting conclusion to this introduction will be found in the resolution adopted by the S.P.G. at the meeting when his death was announced. It reads as follows:—

“The Society records with the deepest regret the death of the Rev. James Alfred Colbeck. No more faithful, earnest, and successful missionary has gone forth in this generation to carry the gospel to the heathen. The Church has lost a man who is a signal example of all that a missionary ought to be.”

It remains only to mention that in this short memoir there is no attempt at literary style, but simply to offer the record of a short and noble life spent in the service of Christ in the foreign mission field of the Church.

GEORGE H. COLBECK,
*Chaplain to H.M. Forces; formerly Mission
Priest and Chaplain at Mandalay.*

WOOLWICH, *All Saints' Day*, 1901.

CHAPTER I.

JAMES ALFRED COLBECK was born at the village of Lower Bebington, in the county of Chester, on February 11, 1852. It was at a very early age that he conceived the idea of becoming a

missionary, and this desire developed as years went on. At the age of sixteen he entered St. Boniface College, Warminster, and an extract from a letter written to his mother, who from the first fostered his desire, dated May 14, 1868, soon after his admission into Warminster, may well be inserted here.

"My eagerness for the work," he says, "increases continually, and I pray that I may be a worthy bearer of the Cross of Christ to the dark lands. It may seem strange, but my hope is that I may be enabled to choose a most difficult mission, or where no seed has been sown, and a place where no soil has been ploughed; events may truly be ordered otherwise by the Great Disposer of all things, and I may seem too poetical in my language, but that is just as I feel at present. I often wonder how it is that I, the second son of a fatherless family, should have had such abundant opportunities for this end showered upon me. Truly I cannot tell. It has been ordered by God, I know and believe, but why? Again I am at fault. Is it because there are so many of us in the family that one is by right devoted to God's service? If we had been situated in the ages before Moses and the Law this would, no doubt, have been the reason, and the eldest son would have been taken. If this is the case, is there any reason why I should be chosen to bear the office? 'But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.'

"I doubt not, dear mother, that it has cost you much to give me up, as it were, to God; but you know it is a blessed service, and it is a most unthankful heart that will receive all and return nothing. If your son be found worthy, then truly your sacrifice will be esteemed, and doubly esteemed in the sight of God, though his years may be short

and his labours quickly over. This, the partly dark outlook in the voyage of my life, need not necessarily be realized; but it is as well to nerve one's self for the greatest amount of sacrifice, as well as to pray for the best completion and most prosperous course that is possible. You know also 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

In this very early stage of his college career there is, it will be noticed, a remarkable forecast of his subsequent work and early death, and all the more remarkable when we reflect that it was written in the freshness and eagerness of youthful enthusiasm.

From Warminster he proceeded to Canterbury, entering St. Augustine's College on August 26, 1870. Our future missionary now entered upon the more direct preparation and training for his work. There is no doubt that he had a secret longing to go to one of the Universities, but difficulties as to ways and means proved an obstacle, and so that course had to be abandoned.

He entered St. Augustine's with burning zeal and enthusiasm, which was the characteristic of his whole life. We turn again to his diary, and quote his first impressions of this great missionary college. He writes—

"*August 27, 1870.*—My first impressions of St. Augustine's: After a good sleep, I awoke just before six o'clock. Everything was perfectly calm and still, and I indulged in a little thought as to my position, which is, however, as yet unknown to me. Soon I heard the clock strike six, and then I arose, first lifting up my heart to Him 'Who gives all good things.' My rooms are on the north side, and face out upon an orchard. The study is 3 yds. \times $4\frac{1}{2}$, bedroom 3×2 . The furniture consists of a table, a large armchair and a smaller one, a large book-case; over the study

window is painted 'God be merciful to me, a sinner.' The chapel looks very nice indeed. Have still to see much, but what I have seen I am pleased with. It is really a college, and a very monastic establishment, though as to 'ritual' it is not what its enemies say, either way, to speak ambiguously. My own rooms look bare enough, and I am content at present that they should be so."

During his course at St. Augustine's he obtained the highest honours his college could bestow, gaining, amongst other distinctions, the Whytehead Greek Testament, the Mathematical Exhibition—founded by the Fellows of St. John's College, Cambridge, the Oriental Scholarship, and in his final year he was senior student and "Memorial Scholar." He was selected by the S.P.G. in 1873 for Burmah, and left England on New Year's Day, 1874, to join the Mandalay Mission under the Rev. J. E., now Dr., Marks.

Here is an extract from a private letter written very soon after his arrival at Mandalay. The Mission had just been keeping the first anniversary of the Consecration of the Church, during which there was a baptism of a young Burmese convert. After describing the service he writes:—

"Too much has been said from time to time about Missionary Reports, so that in my account I have been specially anxious not to make things look better than they are; and, after all, what is this one young convert among the many heathen around? As to his motives—we have done much for him—perhaps gratitude to us personally has been the primary or moving cause; but surely he was not on that account to be refused. When, on the day before his Baptism, he declared his intention and desire to be a disciple of our dear Lord, and to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, I was quite overcome. In all my partings from home

I did not shed a tear, but now they gushed to my eyes and made me keep silence lest I should fairly break down. I know that Baptism is only the beginning of a new life, but it is a real and decisive step, and there is, after all, a great gulf between the baptized and those whom he has left. This was, perhaps, what passed through my mind, and, together with the thought of having been allowed in ever so humble and feeble a way to lead this boy to our Lord, broke me down. I may add that the boy was one whom I had learned to love very much. There is something very attractive about Burmese lads. It puzzles me to find out what prevents many of them from becoming Christians. I suppose early associations would be the best answer. Many of them seem wanting in nothing save the 'Sign of the Cross' upon their brow, and the Indwelling Spirit."

CHAPTER II.

THE young missionary was admitted to Deacon's Orders by the late Bishop Milman of Calcutta in 1874. During 1875-78 he worked in Rangoon, and during part of this period had charge of St. John's College. He established the Burmese missions at Kemmendine and Alah-'Choung, and the Tamil mission of St. Gabriel's also witnesses to his zeal and devotion.

In 1877 he was advanced to the Priesthood by Bishop Johnson, until recently Metropolitan of India. Hear what the young candidate for the holy office says at the moment of his Ordination:—

"I think I felt the awful solemnity all the day, but especially when we all knelt during the *Veni Creator*. My soul seemed to be breathing itself out in desire for grace, and my too ready eyes filled again and again. I cannot describe the awful

moment when the Commission and Power were given, but it did seem as though I could feel the coming down and entrance of the Blessed Spirit, and I could hardly breathe or restrain myself. Would to God I might keep the ever-fresh remembrance of that blessed moment! 'Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!'"

The missions of the Church in Burma received an impetus by the consecration on St. Thomas's Day, 1877, of the Right Rev. J. H. Titcomb as first Bishop of Rangoon, and this marked a new era in the development and history of the Church throughout the country. With reference to the mission at Kemmendine, it may be of interest to quote from the Bishop's "Personal Recollections of British Burma." His Lordship writes as follows:—

"Let me now speak of what is being done in the way of more evangelistic work in this city among the Burmese. By God's blessing, it has considerably improved since my arrival in Rangoon. At that period the central residence of the mission was at Kemmendine, a suburban village between two or three miles from the centre of the city, under the charge of the Rev. J. A. Colbeck, assisted by two Burmese Catechists.

"Mr. Colbeck exhibited signs of true missionary zeal and devotion in a remarkable degree, living in a native Burmese house among Buddhists, in a single upper room which served him as a study, bedroom, and dining-room. This he generously did in order that the lower room might be devoted to the purpose of a chapel, in which he conducted daily and Sunday services for the converts. I shall not easily forget the first visit I paid to Mr. Colbeck's house when climbing up to his dwelling-room by a rough ladder, afterwards attending evening service in his little chapel. I witnessed the simplicity, yet earnestness, of his loving labour for the

Lord. I could but feel that all this was a germ of Divine life which, as chief pastor, it was my duty to cherish with my best powers."

In 1878 he was sent up again to Mandalay, and remained there until all the British subjects were ordered down by the Viceroy on account of the unfriendly relations existing between the two Powers. We recall the terrible events of this period. The accession of Thibaw, who had been a pupil in the S.P.G. Royal School at Mandalay, was the cause of most horrible atrocities and cruelties. Mandalay was in a state of the utmost terror and unrest, and the feeling was, "Whose turn will come next?" Mr. Colbeck had made himself obnoxious to the Burmese Government by rescuing several members of the Royal Family from the clutches of Thibaw, and saving, it is estimated, some seventy or eighty lives from torture, death, or imprisonment. The story is graphically told by Bishop Titcomb.

"At this time it was refreshing to see the calm self-reliance and imperturbability of our English residents, including even the ladies, who, whilst their friends at home were so apprehensive, themselves remained perfectly undismayed. Still more admirable was the behaviour of Mr. Colbeck, our devoted missionary, in the chief centre of this excitement, for to his heroic conduct alone may be traced the saving of several important lives, seeing it was to him the Nyoung Yan Prince and his brother fled, together with their wives and children. At first these refugees were placed in the English church as a sanctuary; it soon, however, became apparent that, if their lives were to be secured, they must, by some means or other, be transferred to the British Residency. No easy business! for the way was dogged by Burmese soldiers, who were disguised as monks and coolies,

having orders to capture the Nyoung Yan Prince either dead or alive. Mr. Colbeck, however, was quite equal to the emergency. He dressed the princes as Madrassi servants, and bade them carry a lantern before him one dark night. He then disguised the Nyoung Yan's chief wife as a jewel merchant. The ruse succeeded. They reached the Residency safely. Moreover, when it was known that the important persons had eluded their watchers, the vigilance of the spy system became relaxed, the rest of the family with their retainers all getting over safely by ones and twos. Shortly after this they were sent by steamer to Rangoon, where I much enjoyed two interviews with them. Subsequently they were removed, for still greater safety, to Calcutta.

"A communication made to me by Mr. Colbeck some time after this, respecting his mission work in the capital, will show that he was not only a preserver of human lives, but a diligent overseer of souls. He says—

"Last Sunday two adults made their profession of Faith. These were the stewardess of the Nyoung Yan Prince's sister and one of the maids-of-honour of Nyoung Yan's mother; God willing we shall baptize them next Sunday. One of these ladies is quite a child in knowledge, but receives with meekness the Word of God. She has been in the Palace from her infancy, without once having left it until now. She is seventeen years of age, and first came to me as I was sitting in the vestry of the church some months ago, begging me to help her mistress, who was being barbarously treated. The other lady is a clever, intelligent woman of about twenty-three. She has had a hard struggle to give up her Buddhist idols and, perhaps what is more to her, her hopes of earthly grandeur. I have not the least doubt that both these ladies

possess an intelligent and real desire to embrace Christianity. The elder groans in spirit that she is not able to go and tell the good news to her young mistress. If the members of Cæsar's household thus embrace the truth, may we not hope in due time that Cæsar himself will bow to Christ? The thought overpowers me! A nation might be born in a day. You will not wonder if in the midst of such blessings I greatly shun the idea of leaving Mandalay."

It is no wonder that the long weary months of anxiety and responsibility told upon the health of the young priest, and we are not surprised to hear of a dangerous illness, about which he writes in the month of September, 1879—

"I have been very near death," he says, "and have become very much reduced by loss of blood and inability to eat food, but now, 'thanks to God,' I am quickly recovering health and strength. It has been a strange sickness. On Sunday, the 31st of August, the native Christians especially made supplication for me. On Monday I was thought to be at the worst, and dying, and I gave myself up entirely and completely into God's hands, wishing neither to live nor to die, but only that His will might be done. However, I recovered, and two days ago I shuffled or staggered to church, but now I can walk quite well and carry my stick. I am thankful."

It was very soon after this that we hear of his departure from Mandalay, and on the 26th of October we have a letter written in his own graphic style from Rangoon, describing the exodus from Mandalay. He writes thus—

"After the Cabul Massacre the Indian Government got more anxious about our position in Mandalay, and when Colonel Browne left us he wrote strongly to the Viceroy, representing the extreme danger we were in should any sudden

freak of madness seize either the king or the mob, as we were utterly defenceless—timber and mat houses, only a small guard of twenty Sepoys, and living two miles or so from the steamer's landing-place. This seems to have decided the Viceroy, and not wishing to be wise after the event, he determined to remove us all beforehand.

"It required some clever manipulation to get Court Records and ammunition away without observation, and no one was allowed to pack up furniture lest open alarm should be given to the Burmese. At last all was determined, and on Sunday, the 5th of October, I was rather surprised on my return from evensong to find Mr. St. Barbe, the acting Resident, and Mr. Austin, the correspondent of the *Times*, sitting in my house. I asked Mr. St. Barbe why he had not been to church, and then he began to tell me what was the matter. We were all to march down to the steamer quietly next morning at six o'clock, but on no account was I to tell any one about it that night. I did not wish to leave, but he expressed himself very strongly that if I stayed, having been so mixed up in the troubles, I should certainly bring on immediately what the Indian Government were not yet prepared for; and of course the Burmese Government bare me but little love for what I have done.

"I thought it over carefully, and sought direction. Then there seemed to be but one course open; and now that I have left, my conscience does not in the least upbraid me. Only three or four of our Christians stayed behind, so that I did not desert the flock committed to me. It would not have done to tell even trusty Lawrence what was about to take place, so I sent him off to the steamer the same evening with Mary and Elizabeth, the two maids-of-honour, not telling him I should so soon follow. I did not pack up

much, but did not go to bed for fear of over-sleeping myself, and also because I wished, as early as was safe, to give notice to Mr. Mackertoom, our worthy schoolmaster. I gathered some of my few treasures, clothing, and books, and about 3.30 on Monday morning went into church, dismantled the altar, took away cross and candlesticks, altar-cloth, service books, registers, etc. I put the altar slab under the floor of the church, and then with some sadness left it, praying soon to be permitted to come back. At 4.30 I woke up Mr. Mackertoom and then the boys, who slept in the house. They opened their eyes in astonishment when I said we were off to Rangoon that very day, but were not afraid, and helped me to get together more books and such like. I was ready in full time, but Mr. Mackertoom was rather late, so that the Residency party marched down without us—Sepoys with fixed bayonets and loaded rifles. After somewhat impatiently waiting, I got off the schoolmaster and his wife—the others had gone on ahead—and then left the church-compound last of all, promising a good reward to the Burmese sergeant of the guard if I found all well on return."

On November 7th he seems to have arrived safely in Rangoon, and mentions the fact in a note written on this day :—

"People, especially the Burmese Christians, are very glad to see me again. What with rumours of Thibaw's malice and the severe illness, they have been continually expecting the worst.

"Nothing seems settled about our relations with Upper Burmah, but an Embassy which was half-way down to Rangoon has been refused permission to come to the Chief Commissioner. Our Government decline any political relationship whatever. I am no longer at the mercy of King Thibaw.

CHAPTER III.

THE close of the year 1879 found Mr. Colbeck at Maulmain, where, on the abandonment of the Mandalay Mission, he was sent to re-establish the old mission which had been founded as long ago as 1859 by the Rev. A. Shears. New life and vigour was soon infused into the mission, a number of Christians coming from Mandalay forming the nucleus of a small Burmese community.

Soon a school was opened, and steps taken to begin a distinctly evangelistic mission. A visit to this mission, dedicated to St. Augustine of Canterbury, was paid by the present Bishop of Rangoon—Dr. Strachan—in 1880, when on his way to England for a well-earned rest, after many years of devoted work in the diocese of Madras.

Dr. Strachan, in his interesting little volume, "From East to West," alludes to the mission as follows:—

"On the turn of the tide we steamed up the winding river, passing Amhurst, and entered Maulmain harbour in the afternoon. Nothing could exceed the beauty of the situation of this port. It is built on the bend of the river, which looks like a peaceful bay, with a delightful background of hill and dale; trees of dark luxuriant foliage and fields of sea-green. On many of the hills golden pagodas basked in the sun and flashed back some of its glory. After a drive of two miles we came to Mr. Colbeck's house, and had a very hearty welcome from that devoted missionary. The central room of the house is fitted up with great taste as a chapel, where daily prayers are said. At the time of our arrival they were at evensong. We slipped in quietly, and though we knew nothing of Burmese we soon found out what part

of the service they were engaged in, and it was a real joy to be able to join our fellow-Christians in that precious form of devotion—the blessed heritage of our Church. Mr. Colbeck has been here only about three months. He has much to encourage him. Already there are about thirty adherents ; some of them, however, accompanied him from Mandalay.”

He soon won the hearts of many in Maulmain, and the work was richly blessed. In addition to the boys’ school—a girls’ school—St. Agnes, in connection with the S.P.G. Ladies Association, was opened. A noble pile of buildings—church, schools, and parsonage—now stands as a monument to his energetic zeal and self-sacrificing labours.

When news came, at the close of 1885, that he was for the third time to proceed to Mandalay, his Maulmain people were deeply sorrowful. He was, however, glad once more to return to the royal city and resume the mission which had been evacuated, and left the well-established work at Maulmain to be carried on and developed by his brother, John Arthur, who had been assisting there for some time.

Soon after his arrival at Mandalay he re-opened the school, and the church and clergy house were speedily set in order. They had suffered comparatively little damage during the interregnum, and were put right at little cost. It is interesting to read the account of his arrival at the Golden City :—

“Getting near Mandalay, I felt a little bit sick at heart and sad, for I had left loving hearts and pleasant work, and a nice church and schools at St. Augustine’s and St. Agnes, Maulmain, and I did not know what to expect now in Mandalay. The Chancellor of the French Consulate came on board and said, ‘There is no longer any English church ; it is all ruined.’ My spirits fell lower, but I breathed a prayer as I landed for the third time in Mandalay, and after Mark Doorroosawmy—a

student from Kemnendine, who was my companion and helper—had bustled about in the confusion ashore, we got our little baggage landed and took a bullock-cart for the town. I did not at first remember the route, but before long I saw a familiar object. Now, what was it? Yes, you are right! It was the tall square tower of the church, looking as sturdy and strong as ever. So much for the Monsieur. Probably he had never looked for the English church, so he had never seen it."

During the early days of the campaign the church compound, and indeed the church, were used by dacoits and others as a place of refuge, and after capture they were led to trial, and perhaps to execution. One fact may be chronicled, namely, that whilst dacoity and fires endangered life and property, Mr. Colbeck remained outside the walled enclosure, living in a little room at the back of the clergy house, with one or two faithful Christian lads for his companions.

He was very soon appointed Acting-chaplain to the troops, offering the use of his own church, and giving assistance at Headquarters during the absence of the garrison chaplain, and also visiting various outposts. For these services he received the India medal with Burma clasps, 1885-87.

His abilities as a Burmese scholar are well known, and for years he had taken an active part in translation work. He was at the very time of his death bringing out a series of little works in the vernacular, which were published through the generosity of the venerable S.P.C.K.

He was also examining chaplain to the Bishop. His experience in this direction was gladly placed at the disposal of the Indian Government, and as a member of the Mandalay Board of Examiners he was well known, and many officers who have been

before the Board have to thank him for kindly advice and assistance in their work of preparation.

To Mr. Colbeck was also given charge of the Royal Library in the Mandalay Palace. Let him tell his own story of some of the discoveries :—

“I have now charge of the Royal Library in the Palace, and am to set to work cataloguing as soon as possible. There is a Russian Professor here, so it was partly, perhaps, to take care of him that I was so readily put on by our officers. My dear old teacher, Dr. Rost, of the India Library, will doubtless be very glad to hear we have saved the Palace Library. It was being sold bit by bit for prize-money, but I suggested to General Prendergast that it would be a graceful act on the part of the Army to make a present of it to our Universities at home, instead of making mincemeat of the books. He at once agreed. Whether London India Library, Oxford or Cambridge, or all three will receive the offer is not yet settled. Strange as it may seem, the books will be of more value to learning and science in London than in Mandalay or Rangoon. The old King would not allow even copies to be made of his books.”

“I picked up a pretty gold book—palm-leaves—and written with an iron stylus, and found it was a book of meditation and devotion belonging to the Princess May-Doo, who became Queen May-Doo, one of the wives of King Bah-gyee-Daw, who fought against us in the first Burmese War. The book is dated, Burmese Era, 1194, *i.e.* A.D. 1833. Another book was a part of an illustrated life of Gautama. Considering all things, it was singular to find a portrait of our Queen. This was sent—I forget whether in 1866 or 1871—with an autograph letter. . . . Both letter and portrait are now taken good care of.

“Another interesting piece of spoil came into my hands—a Burmese document on stiff paper with

gold margin, signed 'Dalhousie.' This made me look eagerly, and I found it was the State despatch which settled the British boundary after the second Burmese War."

CHAPTER IV.

MR. COLBECK was ever a friend to Christian and heathen alike, and many who had known him in the olden days in Mandalay soon found him out, and came for his advice and kindly sympathy in their time of need. Amongst them, a number of the Royal Ladies—queens and princesses—and if defence is needed for interesting himself in their affairs, let him answer for himself:—

"I fear," he says, "I shall come in for knocks and reproofs from some people, who will say I am interfering in things which do not concern me. If any one finds fault with a missionary for helping in this way I shall answer, 'Consider the topsyturviness of Mandalay just now. The people hardly know whether they are Burmese or British subjects, and whether they are on their heads or their feet, and in particular these queens and princesses are not yet accustomed to the ways of the world, any more than a flock of good Sisters of Charity from a convent would be.'"

Amidst great excitement, dacoity and confusion, constant movement of troops, it is a great comfort and delight to read of the progress of mission work, and see evident tokens of God's blessing on the labours of the mission priest. He could count amongst his friends and supporters both military and civil officials, who not only visited the mission, but testified by personal knowledge to the good work going on. Many a young officer from the jungle, or some distant outpost, on sick leave, made the clergy house his harbour of refuge, and

placed himself under the care and tender nursing of him whom they had learned to regard as a true friend, whilst numbers, both officers and men, came to him for spiritual advice and the Ministry of Reconciliation. The following letter, written on January 9, 1888, gives a glowing account of Christmas Day 1887:—

“We have had a grand and glorious Christmas, beautiful weather, numbers of friends, plenty of work, feasting and playing, and, above all, most happy Church Services and Sacraments. Christmas Eve came, and the church decorations were very pretty. We have a heap of youngsters about us who will do what we tell them, so they helped us in the church, and very successfully, too. At 4 p.m. we were ready, and formed up our choir for the processional. The military chaplain and a number of his steady soldiers—guildsmen and Bible-class men—joined us, and we had a very hearty service. The Baptisms, 31 in number (20 men and 11 women, the eldest 67 years and the youngest 16) were, of course, by immersion in the baptismal tank, which is let down into the floor of the church. It was an affecting sight to see people ranged round the font, and to hear them repeat altogether the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and Ten Commandments, and to hear their general and individual answers to the questions of the service. Both H—— and I felt it very much, and at times were likely to break down in the service out of pure joy and gladness; the Chaplain said the service was most impressive, and so did a Baptist missionary who was in church during the service.

“I hope all came from the right motive, and that they have found a blessing. It was indeed a day of joy to us, and so was the next day—Christmas Day. Matins and sermon (English) at

8 a.m., followed by Celebration in English and Burmese. Just at the end of Matins I left the choir, and put on the vestments, and then the choir went round the church, singing 'O come, all ye faithful.' The Burmese Christians took this as a sign, and trooped in to make a big congregation—such, indeed, as had never been seen in Mandalay church, I suppose, since it was built. There were 56 communicants, and the offertory amounted to Rs. 252, but with other offerings during the day and season we had more than Rs. 650 for the church and work this Christmas time. I do not like to keep Christmas offerings in the place where they are given, so we are sending Rs. 76 to Lady Dufferin's Medical Fund for the Women of India, and Rs. 76 to the Shwebo Medical Mission. Other amounts we are bound to keep, as they are specially offered for local work.

"Such was our happy Christmas. I have said, and say again, it was the most Christian and Christmas-like Christmas that I have ever spent out of England, and it was as easy as could be to imagine one's self back again in a grandly decorated and crowded English church at home amongst dear friends.

"Is not this cheering? It would make a missionary of the dullest Christian, I should think!"

CHAPTER V.

ONE of the last things Mr. Colbeck was engaged in was the opening of the Shwebo Mission, accompanying Dr. Sutton to select site, etc. He had made several visits to the mission, giving advice and every assistance in his power. The Mission of the Holy Spirit at Madaya—a village some seventeen miles north of Mandalay, also claimed him, and it is possible that a visit to this

mission, and a long boat journey to and from Madaya, brought on the severe attack of fever and sickness which ultimately caused his death. Thus he writes on—

"*February 26, 1888.*—I am off to Madaya to-night to inspect and arrange our new purchase of house and land there, and to set the catechist to his work in the village. We shall, I hope, have the first Celebration here on Tuesday morning, when probably there will be some twelve or fifteen Christians gathered together from the villages about, who are to make Madaya their centre of gathering for the present. Madaya ought to be an important station for us soon, and we will do our best to make it so."

"*February 27.*—Here I am after an easy journey, only it was a disturbed one, as we now and then bumped up against a bridge or another boat. I had two blankets with me, and was beautifully warm, and made my cassock and Communion case into a pillow. When I awoke we were nowhere in particular, but I heard the reveille sounding from the bugles of some military post."

After his long and continuous service he had a right to go home for a rest, and this he had hoped to do at the end of the year, having applied for furlough, but the work was increasing so rapidly that he had just sent word home that he could not possibly leave.

"I am afraid," he says, "you must try to make up your minds not to see me this year. It is not that I wish to stay and disappoint you, but because the work here is just now so active and requires the presence of a fully qualified missionary, otherwise it will greatly suffer and be checked."

"If things go on as they are doing now we shall want a bigger church before long, or have to split up the day for more services. My longing for

a real genuine Burmese congregation is satisfied—we have it, and now want another and yet another.

“Please look on all our work here as your own, and rejoice that it has been permitted me to see it so develop before I go home. How different from the aspect in 1874 or 1879!”

He returned from Madaya on the Wednesday morning, feeling very unwell. A doctor was called in, who did not apprehend danger; but on Friday, at 11 a.m., a sudden change for the worse took place, and all was over by 3 p.m.

His last prayer was for the Madaya Mission and the Burmese Christians. He had no idea, as far as one could see, that his end was so near. Dr. George Pedley, a friend of the mission, was constant in his attendance, and did all that could be done. The Rev. A. Stone, garrison chaplain, came prepared to administer the Blessed Sacrament, but he had only just commenced the service in the little clergy-house chapel, when he was called to the bedside to commend the dear soul into the hands of the Master whom he had served so faithfully, and on March 2, 1888, James Alfred Colbeck passed peacefully to the rest of Paradise.

We cannot do better than conclude this short memoir of a devoted life than in the words of the present well-beloved warden of St. Augustine's:—

“He died on the glorious field of the Church's work in Burmah. Wherever the Burmese missions are mentioned, there the name of James Alfred Colbeck will be known. The very life and soul of the mission, of rare devotion and simplicity, staunch in the faith and fervent in the work of an Evangelist, he has been always in the front of the battle, and has died at his post.”

R.I.P.

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